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Kevin Collins

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Under the Tree

A serious family comedy for mature audiences

by Kevin Collins

CHARACTERS

Mrs. Moroski *The Moroskis appear only
Mr. Moroski as huge shadows. Their lines
Sally Moroski should be delivered electroni-
Billy Moroski cally.*

Sig
Thad *Shepherds*
Rupe

Gaspar
Melchior *Wise Men*
Balthazaar

Mary
Joseph

Baby Jesus should be played by a rag doll. His one line ("ai") and the sheep's lines (all "baaa") should be delivered electronically.

SCENE ONE

Beneath the Christmas tree in the Moroskis' living room. In tableau, Mary, Joseph, three wise men, three shepherds, and two sheep focus upon Baby Jesus sleeping in the manger. No one moves. Above the nativity scene, huge tree limbs taper toward the ceiling, and a few ornaments—including a very large red one—dangle above the living-room floor. Surrounding the nativity scene, only partially lit, are several large, neatly-wrapped Christmas presents. The sixty-foot shadows of the Moroskis flit across the scene, and their voices boom.

MRS. MOROSKI: Alright, you two, that's enough for tonight.

BILLY: Aww, Mom!

SALLY: It's early!

MR. MOROSKI: You heard what your mother said. Now, both of you... (*A stooping shadow covers the nativity scene.*)

BILLY: Just a few more—

MRS. MOROSKI: Billy Moroski, you get away from that nativity scene!

BILLY: Okay.

MRS. MOROSKI: Your father and I spent half an hour getting it right after you messed it up last time.

BILLY: I did not!

SALLY: You did too. Liar!

BILLY: Mom! I didn't. Really! Sally must've.

SALLY: Ooh, you liar!

MRS. MOROSKI: It doesn't matter. As long as neither of you touches it before Aunt Jessie comes tomorrow. Okay? Promise?

SALLY: I promise.

BILLY: Me too.

MR. MOROSKI: Say it, Son.

BILLY: What? Oh. Okay. I promise too.

MRS. MOROSKI: Good. Now go to bed. I'll be up in a minute.



SALLY: Alright. G'night, Daddy.

BILLY: 'night, Dad.

MR. MOROSKI: Good night, kids. Merry Christmas.

THE KIDS (*in unison*): Merry Christmas! (Their shadows exit.)

MRS. MOROSKI: Are you going to stay up and finish wrapping?



Photo courtesy Fontanini®

MR. MOROSKI: No, I'm beat. I'll set the alarm and get up early.

MRS. MOROSKI: Okay.

MR. MOROSKI: You want to hit the lights? (*Living room lights go down, and the shadows disappear.*) What about the Christmas tree lights?

MRS. MOROSKI: I thought we'd leave them on. And leave the drapes open.

MR. MOROSKI: What? Is the Christmas spirit making you feel charitable toward the electric company?

MRS. MOROSKI: It's Christmas Eve! If we can brighten up the lives of any passing strangers tonight, it's worth a couple of pennies to—

MR. MOROSKI: Okay! Okay! We'll leave them on. I just hope it doesn't give those passing strangers the notion to break in and steal presents. Let's go to bed.

MRS. MOROSKI: You have no Christmas spirit.

MR. MOROSKI: That's why I have you: to provide it. (*Shadows exit. There is the amplified sound of a wet, sixty-foot kiss. The statues begin to move about in place.*)

MARY: I thought they'd never leave. I had a terrible itch in my neck from the second they came into the room.

JOSEPH: Get the hay out of the kid's mouth, will you? Why did you do a thing like that?

MARY: I was afraid he'd start to cry. I didn't want to—

JOSEPH: You know what kind of kid we're dealing with here. If he wants to cry, it's only right—in the divine scheme of things—that he should—

MARY: But he's only a baby. He can't judge things like—

JOSEPH: Sure he's a baby, but make no mistake about it: if he wanted to fly around this barn a few times, he wouldn't so much as have to furrow his brow....

MARY: That's not right, Joe. The angel Gabriel explained it to me. Yes, he's a divine child, but in human form. He's as powerless as any other infant.

PUG (*at Thad's knee*): Baaa.

JOSEPH: Hey, can we get the sheep out of here, please?

THAD: But they came to see their savior.

JOSEPH: Oh, they did not!

RUPE: They did too! Didn't you?

MARNIE (*on Rupe's neck*): Baaa.

JOSEPH: They came because you brought them. Now, I have to insist. I'm letting you guys stay. But put the sheep outside.

THAD: But we can't do that.

JOSEPH: Why not?

THAD: Well, you see, Pug here is welded to my ankle.

RUPE: And Marnie is grafted to my neck.



SIG: They can't be separated.

JOSEPH: Then I'm sorry. You'll have to leave for a while. It's my duty to protect my...stepson from the elements. And I consider sheep to be the elements.

THAD: But he wants to play.

JOSEPH: Who?

THAD: Little Jesus. He wants to play with Pug.

JOSEPH: This child is less than a day old. Playing with sheep is the furthest thing from his mind. Please.

RUPE: Well...Alright...

SIG: Can I stay? I've just got a crook.

JOSEPH: Well, alright, but you...No! Could you leave too, please? Just for a while. I'll let you know.

SIG: Oh...well...okay, sir. (*The shepherds exit.*)

JOSEPH (*to wise men*): You guys too, huh? I want to be alone with my family for a minute.

GASPAR: Very well, sir. We will be right outside.

JOSEPH: Thanks.

GASPAR: And, while we will make the formal presentations later, I want you to know that we have brought with us gifts for the child. From the East.

JOSEPH: Oh, really? What'd you bring?

GASPAR: My gift is gold. Gold, that most precious of all —

JOSEPH: Gold!! Way to go, Pal! Where is it?

MELCHIOR: Frankincense is my gift, in order that —

JOSEPH: Incense...You know, actually, as long as we're in the barn here, that may come in handy. Now, where's that gold? (*Gaspar hands him the gift.*) Thanks. And yours?

BALTHAZAAR: Myrrh.

JOSEPH: Myrrh?

BALTHAZAAR: Yes, myrrh.

JOSEPH: What's that?

BALTHAZAAR (*singing in a deep bass*):
Myrrh is mine, a bitter perfume,
Breathes a life of gathering gloom,
Sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying,
Sealed in a stone-cold tomb.

JOSEPH: Yeah...I...I bet you're a laugh a minute back east. Not my idea of the perfect baby gift, but...You know? That's the great thing about diversity: everybody has...different ideas about... It's the thought that counts, right? It's the...You guys are all heart. All of you. Really. Thank you very much. We'll make the formal presentations later. Meanwhile, if it's okay with you, I'll hang onto the gold, huh?

GASPAR: Very well, sir.



JOSEPH: I'll see you in a while. (*Wise men exit.*) Ugh. The guy with the myrrh gives me the creeps. Now, what were we talking about? Oh, right, the kid.

MARY: You said it yourself, Joe: the child is less than a day old. Playing with sheep is the furthest thing from his mind.

JOSEPH: Oh, sure! But not because he can't! He's just got bigger fish to fry than sheep.

MARY: He doesn't have any "fish to fry" for a while, Joe. Listen to me. I told you about my visitation. The archangel Gabriel revealed to me the nature of this child. I mean, I hate to pull rank, but I was—

JOSEPH: So! It's come to this! Okay, I'll admit it: you're the Mother of God. But you're not the only one to have visitations. I told you about mine, remember? The guy with the wings who told me that I should marry you even though you were pregnant? Even though I wasn't the father? Remember?

MARY: Is that story true, Joe?

JOSEPH: What do you mean by that?

MARY: I don't know. That story always struck me as a bit...convenient. I mean, I have a visitation and, sure enough, a couple of months later, you have a—

JOSEPH: Mary, I'm shocked! If you thought that I was lying to you...

MARY: Not *lying*...

JOSEPH: ...why is this the first I've heard of your doubts?

MARY: Oh, Joe. You've been so good. But that story about your angel...I just had a hard time with it. You were so noble in accepting me as I was. It's only normal for you to...to find some way to save face with the boys. When you told me that story and I seemed to accept it, it was only because I didn't want to interfere with your...machismo, or whatever.

JOSEPH: Well, Mary, it's about this simple: I saw the angel. He told me to marry you. He told me that the child would have a divine plan from the moment he was born. I saw the guy's wings. I asked him to take off his robe, and they were embedded into his back: bone structure, musculature, everything. Now, I'm your husband, and I stand here sane and sober and say this to you. If you can't believe every word of it, then there's no trust in this marriage.

MARY: I'm beginning to worry about this marriage, too.

JOSEPH: What?

MARY: You were so supportive of me for a while. But for the last couple of months, you've been nervous. And—I don't know!—just not yourself.

JOSEPH: Why shouldn't I be nervous?

MARY: But you've been so zealous and single-minded in trying to convince me of things, even things that contradict what I was told by the angel Gabriel. You shouldn't try to do that.

JOSEPH: Mary, whether you can believe it or not, I also had a revelation. It assigned me responsibility for this child. And if an element of what I saw conflicts with something from your vision, well... I think it's at least a fit topic for discussion.



MARY: There can be no discussion. The child and I are in the hands of God, and...

JOSEPH: The child *is* God!

MARY: ...it was revealed to me that I must care for him like he was any other child.

JOSEPH: Of course we must. But that doesn't mean that he couldn't make it without us. Not necessarily...

MARY: You've been under a lot of pressure lately, trying to support us.

JOSEPH: There's no work for me here. I'll be okay once we get back to Nazareth.

MARY: I hope so. Honey, try not to contradict what the angel told me. That's very important to me.

JOSEPH: But isn't it more important to know the truth for sure?

MARY: I know the truth for sure.

JOSEPH: Well, look: I have a plan to prove it one way or another.

MARY: What?

JOSEPH: And if your vision is the unalterable truth, my plan will make all that perfectly clear.

MARY: What?

JOSEPH: I needed some capital for the plan, but I knew that we should try it sooner or—

MARY: What plan?!

JOSEPH: And when this wise man came across with the gold, we got our chance. Listen. This is it.

MARY: I'm listening.

JOSEPH: Okay, we...And listen to the whole thing before you—

MARY: Tell me the plan!

JOSEPH: I'm going to show Jesus a racing form and ask him to pick a winner.

MARY: The races?!

JOSEPH: And if he points one out...

MARY: Joe...

JOSEPH: ...only if he's very clear about it—

MARY: Listen to me, Joe! We had nothing! Now we have a little gold...

JOSEPH: We have a gold mine, Mary. And if he doesn't want to pick anything, he doesn't have to. But if he unmistakably does, I'm going to bet this gold. That's the only way I can prove that I'm right about him. That's the only way I can support him in style.

MARY: I forbid it, Joseph.

JOSEPH: Just look. We don't even know if he'll pick one.

MARY: I don't care if he *names* one, I—

JOSEPH (*holding sheet before the baby*): Here, Baby, what do you think?...Huh?...Have any hunches?



JESUS: Ai!

JOSEPH: Five! He said "five"!

MARY: He said "Ai"!

JOSEPH: What do you mean? Fifth race? Or the five horse in the first race?

MARY: Joseph, I beg you....

JOSEPH: Here. Look at the fifth race, Jeez. Hey look, Mary! Look! He's pointing with one finger! It's a miracle! He couldn't even unroll his little fist, and he's pointing! Huh? Dancing Lady. He's keeping his finger on Dancing Lady. See? Even when I move the paper.

MARY: Joseph, I'm asking you to hand me that gold. It was provided by God to the child and me.

JOSEPH: Correction: Provided by the wise men to only the child. And as his guardian, it is my duty to make it grow for him. I need to do this. You'll see when I come back. Look. She's listed as nine-to-one on the morning line. We can give Jesus the life he deserves. And we can know for sure about his abilities.

MARY: Joe, I never minded the fact that you haven't been working. But it's getting to you. You're not the man I married. Now, I can't forcibly take that gold from you, but if you go out to gamble it, I don't want you to come back.

JOSEPH: I will come back, Mary, and with ten times this much. You'll see.

MARY: Even if you win: once you leave, you're gone.

JOSEPH: You'll see! Everything will be better.

MARY: Can't you see, Joseph? Your mind isn't working as it used to.

JOSEPH: Mary, I have to do this thing.

MARY: Uh-huh. And where do you intend to place your bet?

JOSEPH: At Bethlehem Downs.

MARY: Okay. And where are we now?

JOSEPH: What do you mean?

MARY: Where are we? Are we anyplace but under the tree in the Moroskis' living room in Milwaukee, Wisconsin? Try to see. You can't go to the racetrack. You can't leave this stable until January, when you'll go back into the attic with the rest of us. You're a statue from a nativity scene, Joe!

JOSEPH (*exiting*): I'm going out there! You'll see!

MARY: I mean it, Joe. I don't want you around us anymore.

JOSEPH (*offstage*): You'll see. (*Mary stares down at the baby and begins to weep gently.*)

END OF SCENE ONE

SCENE TWO

Later the same night, under the same tree. The shepherds and sheep are back in the stable, joking, drinking, and laughing too hard at each other's stories.

RUPE: So, did I ever tell you about the bully ram that was terrorizing the flock?

THAD: No. What happened?



RUPE: He was an outsider. He just sort of showed up and started in on the howdy-do's with some of the ladies in the flock. He had taken a fancy to a ripe little two-year-old and was about to have his way with her when Marnie and I happened by.

THAD: Just in time.

RUPE: Tell me! So we asked him—nicely, now—to leave.

SIG: Oh! I bet he didn't like that.

RUPE: He did not. He rammed me in my knee. He was backing up to ram me again, and he must've gotten a whiff of Marnie here, 'cause he lost all his will to fight. He started to climb up my legs to get to her.

THAD: Sounds like an anxious little bugger.

RUPE: Snorting like a hog.

SIG: So, what'd you do?

RUPE: Well, I wasn't about to just surrender Marnie's honor.

SIG: I should hope not.

RUPE: That old boy had the whole field to choose from and he just had to go and pick the lamb that was grafted to my neck.

SIG: They'll do that sometimes, you know; just insist on challenging the boss of the flock. And that's you, Rupe.

THAD: So did you fight the ram?

SIG: Did you do battle for your mate?

RUPE: Well, I... You know, she's not exactly my mate, Sig.

SIG: Oh. Of course not. Just a figure of speech.

THAD: Litotes.

SIG: Right.

RUPE: So, I decided... You know, I'm not sure that "litotes" is quite right. That would be something like, "Well, she's not *not* my mate," wouldn't it?

SIG: Oh, right. No, that's not—

THAD: Anyway, they're just very good friends.

SIG: Right.

MARNIE: Baaa.

THAD: Very, *very* good friends.

RUPE: That's fair. But anyway, he outfoxed me at first by lunging at my legs. I bent down to cover them up without even thinking, and the weight of old Marnie knocked me over flat on my face. I must've been out a while, 'cause when I came to, the ram, he was balanced on my neck. On Marnie! He was moving around a bit, but I couldn't tell what he was doing. I tried to shake him, but he wouldn't get off. Then I hauled them both over to the pond, and I saw in the reflection that he was about to fulfill his sordid intentions while riding on my neck. So I jumped into the pond, held the ram under, and drowned him.

SIG: You upheld your dignity.

RUPE: And Marnie's.

SIG: Well done!



THAD: Did you have to drown the ram?

RUPE: Oh, Thad, he was crazy. If you saw the look in his eye, you'd know that I really had no choice. He taught me a lesson, alright: you must never underestimate the ardor of rutting animals. *(Mary enters with the child and the wise men.)*

SIG: I'll try to remember that.

THAD: I don't think that you had to drown him. You could have let him up. Imagine how heavy your horns must feel when you're drowning.

RUPE: You weren't there to see the evil in his eye, Thad. Why...

MELCHIOR: Pardon me, fellows, but the little mother is putting the baby to bed now. Can we go outside?

RUPE: Doesn't the baby want to play with the sheep yet?

MELCHIOR: No, he's very tired.

THAD: Well, if he wants to play when he's rested, he can play with Pug.

RUPE: Or Marnie.

MELCHIOR: Yes. I'll pass along the word.

SIG: Okay. *(Shepherds exit.)*

MARY: Thank all of you for your help, your concern, and your counsel.

GASPAR: Any way that we can be of service, Madam. Just remember what I said: "When you know yourself, your inner voices will guide you. You will need no external advice."

MARY: Yes.

MELCHIOR: That's very nice. But remember what I said: "Your eyes and your ears must be open if your prayers are to be answered."

MARY: Yes, I'll remember.

BALTHAZAAR: And remember what I said: "Eat five servings of fruits and vegetables every day, get regular but moderate exercise, keep yourself clean, and avoid the dangerous parts of town."

MARY: You seem to be the wisest of all the wise men.

BALTHAZAAR: I don't like to talk about it.

GASPAR: Is there anything else we can do?

MARY: Actually, I was thinking about trying to cash in the gifts you'd brought me. Could you try to do that for me?

MELCHIOR: We will try. *(Wise men exit.)*

MARY: Thank you. *(She puts the baby into the manger then lies down next to it. Joseph enters and watches them in silence.)* I hope I've done the right thing, O Lord and Baby. I know that Joseph was meant to be part of this family, and I worry that I've made a mistake. But the word that the angel used was "helper." And Joe was helpful for a while. But for months now, he has been nothing but a drain. He feels so guilty because he hasn't been working. So he does insane things. He tears down my every effort to keep the promises I made at the Annunciation. I can't have him around us anymore...

JOSEPH: Mary?...Mary?

MARY: Leave, Joe.



JOSEPH: You should know, first of all, that—

MARY: No, Joe! It's true that we probably have to talk some time. But not right now. The baby's sleeping. I'm trying to sleep. Go.

JOSEPH: You should know, first of all, that I lost all the gold at the track. Dancing Lady finished twelfth.

MARY: Go.

JOSEPH: She broke strong out of the gate, but she saw a patch of clover on the infield, and she slowed down to—

MARY: Leave. Forget about it.

JOSEPH: I can't leave.

MARY: You can leave, and you will leave. I thought you might try to return, so I asked those shepherds if they'd...assist me in—

JOSEPH: Hear me out, Mary. We have no choice.

MARY: I'll hear you out another day. Not now!

JOSEPH: We don't have time.

MARY: I don't have time to listen to your ravings! Your mind is damaged somehow...

JOSEPH: No.

MARY: ...and I feel sorry for you, but I have a mission. I can't take care of you.

JOSEPH: We have a mission. And there's nothing wrong with my mind.

MARY: No?

JOSEPH: No.

MARY: Joe, you said you lost the gold at the track, right?

JOSEPH: Right. I was wrong. I'm sor—

MARY: Which track was it, Joe?

JOSEPH: Bethlehem Downs.

MARY: And you say there's nothing wrong with your mind?

JOSEPH: Absolutely nothing.

MARY: Joe, we're in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. And even if you went to the track in Milwaukee, you'd be five feet too short to reach the window. Your universe is under this tree. Beyond it is only darkness and immense living-room furniture. You're operating under a delusion, Joe, and I won't...I can't....

JOSEPH: Yes, we're in Milwaukee. But we're in Bethlehem too. I recognize the existence of the Moroskis, just as they recognize mine, but they can't stop me from living my life. Now we have to go away from here—yourself, the baby, and I. Jesus is in danger.

MARY: What sort of "danger"?

JOSEPH: King Herod. I don't know if he's done it yet, but very soon he will order the death of all male infants.

MARY: That's insane!



JOSEPH: We might save a lot of time if we'd limit the discussion to just those things that you *don't* find insane.

MARY: Ha-ha. Sarcasm isn't helping your case, Joe, and the king would never do something like that.

JOSEPH: He's doing it now.

MARY: I don't believe you. Where did you hear this?

JOSEPH: Well, this probably won't help my case either, but...an...angel...the same guy who came to me before....He...came again. He said we have to leave tonight and go into the land of Egypt. I saw him at the track. He lost a fin on Dancing Lady, too. Said he'd seen Jesus pick him out and figured it was a sure thing.

MARY: Your fantasies are getting bizarre.

JOSEPH: It's not a fantasy. I'm taking you to Egypt tonight if I have to drag you kicking and screaming.

MARY: Don't you threaten me, you—

JOSEPH: We're going, Mary. That's all there is to it. Now pack up. If you want to leave me in Egypt,...well...we'll talk about it in Egypt. Maybe I should ask the angel....

MARY (*calling offstage*): Oh, shepherds! Oh, fellas!

SIG (*offstage*): Yes?

MARY: Could you all please come here in a hurry?

RUPE (*offstage*): Right away.

MARY (*as shepherds enter*): For the last time, Joe, leave me alone!

SIG: What is it?

THAD: Does Jesus want to play with the sheepies?

MARY: No, fellas. It's Joseph.

THAD: Joseph? Well, that's fine. I'd recommend that you play with Pug for starters. She's a very nice—

MARY: No, boys. He came back threatening me, and I'm worried. I'd like you to stick around, just in case.

RUPE: You have nothing to worry about, Madam.

THAD: We're shepherds.

SIG: My good man,...

RUPE: We'll protect you from this heel.

SIG: ...have you ever seen the damage that a crook can do to the human head?

JOSEPH: No.

SIG: Well,...neither have I. But I have seen what it can do to a wolf's head, and let me tell you, it's not a pretty sight.

THAD: Did you hit a wolf with that thing?

MARY: Go, Joe. Now.

JOSEPH: Not without the two of you.

SIG: You heard what the little lady said.



JOSEPH: Can't we talk? Can't you call off these clowns?

RUPE: Clowns, eh?

MARY: We'll talk some other time.

JOSEPH: We're out of time. We have to go.

SIG: Alright, Mister, you asked for it. *(Takes a broad swing at Joseph with the crook. Everyone ducks to miss it. The wise men enter.)*

THAD: Watch out!

GASPAR: Mission accomplished!

RUPE: I've got him coming this way.

MARY: No! Don't catch him! Let him get away!

SIG: I've got him.

MELCHIOR: Please! Stop this!

MARY: You don't understand. They were helping me. Joseph was threatening me.

BALTHAZAAR: That doesn't matter. You're safe now. Violence is not the best solution.

JOSEPH: I concur.

BALTHAZAAR: Of course. Now, what's all this about threats?

JOSEPH: Oh, that was nothing. All I said is that we were leaving. Even if I had to drag her.

MELCHIOR: Hmm.

MARY: Kicking and screaming!

JOSEPH: Kicking and...um...screaming.

GASPAR: Yes. Well, that does certainly sound like a threat to me.

JOSEPH: She wasn't listening to reason.

MARY: I wasn't hearing any!

MELCHIOR: Young man, why is it so important that you all leave tonight?

JOSEPH: I...I had a vision.

MELCHIOR: Yes. Mary has told us about your... visions.

JOSEPH: It was real!

GASPAR: Of course it was, Son. To you.

JOSEPH: I tell you, I was visited by an angel at the racetrack!

MELCHIOR: Stay calm, young man.

JOSEPH: You call yourselves wise men, and you've never heard of a real visit from the beyond?!

BALTHAZAAR: Of course there are such things. But for every one, there are thousands of cases of mistaken identity.

MELCHIOR: And thousands of hoaxes.

GASPAR: And thousands of lunatics.

JOSEPH: The same angel told me about the child before he was born. Ask her! I knew everything before it happened.

MARY: He did know...some things.



JOSEPH: And why have you three traveled so far to be here? You know about this child. Why does it seem so strange that the earthly protector of such a child should have an agent of God about him?

MELCHIOR: Oh, don't get me wrong. I don't necessarily doubt your story.

JOSEPH: What do you mean, "necessarily"?

GASPAR: Well, it does seem a bit...superfluous that two different angels should visit you when one could do the job just as well, and without causing so much trouble.

BALTHAZAAR: Fine. Assume for the moment that both of you received messages from beyond. The question remains, though, if Mary doesn't want Joseph around, should any vision he sees force her to allow him to stay?

JOSEPH: That's none of your business. It's my vision.

MARY: It *is* their business. They're wise men, and they mean to protect me.

JOSEPH: I'm the one who means to protect you, to save your son from Herod's sword.

GASPAR: Herod's sword?

JOSEPH: That's what the angel at the race track told me. Herod means to kill all newborn male babies.

MELCHIOR: Oh, no.

JOSEPH: So I must take Mary and the child to the land of—

BALTHAZAAR: Pack, Mary. Get the child ready for the journey.

MARY: What! What are you saying?

GASPAR: Balthazaar had a feeling....

MELCHIOR: We had spoken to King Herod. We told him that the child we were seeking would be the king of the Jews. I didn't even notice Herod's reaction....

GASPAR: Me neither.

MELCHIOR: ...but Balthazaar told us later that he seemed to be upset at the news: gnashing his teeth and subtly smiting his breast and such.

BALTHAZAAR: I tried to explain that he wouldn't be an earthly king, but something different. I thought I had calmed his fears.

GASPAR: But apparently he didn't.

JOSEPH: Don't you see? We have to leave right now.

BALTHAZAAR: Go, Madam. Go with him. You must act to save the child's life.

MARY: The king is sending soldiers?

MELCHIOR: They mean to kill him.

JOSEPH: And tell her about the way to get into Bethlehem. She thought I was crazy because I claimed that I could leave Milwaukee.

GASPAR: Oh yes, Madam. Around these presents and behind the big couch, you'll find a mouse hole. Go through the hole, and you're in Bethlehem.

JOSEPH: I've been trying to tell you. I'm not crazy. You've just been too caught up in your own vision to consider anyone else's.



BALTHAZAAR: You must go! All of you!

JOSEPH: Come with me only as far as the mouse hole. If you can't see Bethlehem on the other side, I'll go on without you.

MARY: Are there big mice in the hole?

GASPAR: No. The Moroskis had the exterminator out in September. Now, go.

MELCHIOR: Please go, Madam.

MARY: Okay...at least as far as the mouse hole.

BALTHAZAAR: Hurry!

MARY (*dressing the child*): Even if you're right, we still have a lot of talking to do in Egypt.

JOSEPH: Fine. Let's go.

MARY: If I can't see Bethlehem on the other side of that hole, Joe....

JOSEPH: Don't worry.

MELCHIOR: Wait! We almost forgot. We cashed in the other gifts. We've got some money for you. The first stranger we saw asked us if we had any frankincense and myrrh to sell him.

JOSEPH (*taking money*): Thanks, guys. You're gentlemen.

MARY: I think that I should take care of the money from now on, Joseph.

JOSEPH: I guess I can't argue with that. (*Gives her the money. They exit with the baby.*)

BALTHAZAAR: I hope they make it.

GASPAR: The stars are in their favor.

MELCHIOR: And I've charted their biorhythms; they're looking good, too. (*Takes out chart. All three study it as they walk offstage.*) This is Mary's romance line. See how it keeps going up? Joseph's money line, too.

GASPAR: These things are so cool. (*They exit.*)

RUPE: So. You proved pretty handy with that thing.

SIG: All in a day's work. A good shepherd's got to be ready at all times. I mean, when I saw the desperate look in that bully's eye, I knew I had to act fast. So I wound up my crook, and I gave it to him. (*He swings the crook, smashing the big red tree ornament noisily.*) Uh-oh.

RUPE: Now you've done it.

THAD: Hey wise men! (*The wise men re-enter.*)

RUPE: Sig did it.

GASPAR: The Moroskis are going to have a fit.

MR. MOROSKI (in the distance): What the hell was that?

MRS. MOROSKI: Sounded like a light bulb.

MR. MOROSKI: Or an ornament.

MELCHIOR: Everybody find your marks. (*They scramble into the positions in which they began, staring down into the now-empty manger. "Living room lights" come on. Moroski shadows move about the stage.*)



MRS. MOROSKI: It's an ornament, alright. The big red one.

MR. MOROSKI: How's a thing like that happen?

MRS. MOROSKI: How should I know? Hey! Where's the holy family?

MR. MOROSKI: Huh?

MRS. MOROSKI: Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. The manger is empty.

MR. MOROSKI: Well! I think that answers our question.

MRS. MOROSKI: What?

MR. MOROSKI: I'll lay you dollars to doughnuts that William Junior is pretending to sleep right now, with his heart beating a mile a minute.

MRS. MOROSKI: You think so?

MR. MOROSKI: That's really disappointing. He gave me his promise just before bedtime. We might as well get him down here and get it over with.

MRS. MOROSKI: Please, Bill, let it wait 'til morning.

MR. MOROSKI: For his own good, I think we should do it now.

MRS. MOROSKI: Christmas morning, Bill! It's not the time for one of your inquisitions.

MR. MOROSKI: To hell with Christmas!

MRS. MOROSKI: I won't have you saying that in my house!

MR. MOROSKI: Okay, I'm sorry. But to heck with Christmas. The boy gave me his solemn word. I expect you to back me up on this. You're always taking his side when there are important lessons to be learned.

MRS. MOROSKI: Please! Can't it wait? I'll back you up tomorrow. I promise.

MR. MOROSKI: Swift, sure justice. It's the only way. Get William down here.

MRS. MOROSKI: No, Bill....

MR. MOROSKI (*Shadow exits, voice gets distant*): Fine! I'll get him myself.



MRS. MOROSKI (*Shadow exits*): Okay, okay, I'll get him.

(For the remainder of the play, two separate threads of dialogue—under the tree and among the Moroskis—are spoken simultaneously, the Moroskis "distant" voices at a lower volume than the characters under the tree. The Wise men and the shepherds sing the "Myrrh is Mine" song from SCENE ONE very slowly, as a dirge. Gaspar pulls from his robe a book with gilded pages, opens it, and reads aloud over the song. When he finishes, Melchior pulls from his robe a 9" x 12" magazine with a flashy cover photo, opens it, and reads aloud.)

MR. MOROSKI: Bring him into the kitchen. And back me up on this.

MRS. MOROSKI: Please go easy, Bill; it's Christmas.

GASPAR: "Joseph got up and took the child and his mother. And left that night for EGYPT. He stayed there until the death of Herod, to fulfill what The Lord said through the prophet: Out of Egypt I have called my son."

MELCHIOR: "You've just been too caught up in your own vision to consider anyone else's."

MR. MOROSKI (*distant, but screaming*): Don't you lie to me!

MRS. MOROSKI (*waking the neighbors*): Bill! You'll wake the neighbors!

BILLY: Dad! I swear! I didn't!

SALLY: Quiet! I'm trying to sleep!

MR. MOROSKI: Get smart with me, Missy, and I'll come up there.

MRS. MOROSKI: Bill! It's Christmas Day!

BILLY: It wasn't me!

MR. MOROSKI: The truth, Billy!

MARNIE: Baaa.

PUG: Baaa.

